

# Dependent and Independent Clauses

**Clause** – A clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb. There are two types of clauses – independent and dependent.

**Independent Clause** – A group of words with a subject and a verb that makes a complete thought. It could stand alone as a sentence. When joining two independent clauses together, they must be joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction or by a semicolon.

Ex 1. Jeremy worked hard this semester; he applied many of the study skills he learned in his college strategies class.

Ex 2. He studied every night, and he worked in the lab at least once a week.

Jeremy worked hard this semester, he applied many of the study skills he learned in his college strategies class, he studied every night, and he worked in the lab once a week are all complete thoughts with subjects and a verbs.

Use a **semicolon** to join two independent clauses that are too closely related to be separated into two sentences and do not require a coordinating conjunction to smoothly connect the two ideas.

Use a **comma** and a **coordinating conjunction** to join two independent clauses that are too closely related to be separated into two sentences but require a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, yet*) to smoothly connect the two ideas.

**Dependent Clause** – A group of words with a subject and a verb that does not express a complete thought. It cannot stand alone as a sentence, and will always be with an independent clause. Since a dependent clause and an independent clause are not equal (one is a complete thought and the other is not), use a subordinating conjunction and occasionally a comma to join the two clauses.

Ex 2. **When** I first learned about this position, I didn't want to take it.

Ex 3. Please call me **if** anything changes.

**When I first learned about this position** and **if anything changes** are groups of words with subjects and verbs, but they do not express complete thoughts.

**I didn't want to take it** and **Please call me** are groups of words with subjects and verbs that express complete thoughts. Each could stand alone as a sentence. **Please call me** appears not to have a subject, but since it is a command, the subject is **you**. Any time you see a command, the subject is automatically **you** even though it isn't written in the sentence. Look at the following command: *Shut the door* – who is supposed to shut the door? *You* are.

Use a **subordinating conjunction** to introduce a dependent clause that will be joined to an independent clause. Subordinating conjunctions provide a transition between the two ideas and show a clear relationship between them. Examples are *when, although, if, since, because, that, which, who, where, etc.*

Use a **comma** to separate the two clauses if the dependent clause comes first (see ex. 2). A comma is not necessary if the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence (see ex. 3).

**Read the clauses below and decide if they are dependent or independent:**

1. Although the rain has stopped
2. My schedule has changed
3. That the end of the semester is near
4. Who the last person in line is
5. As if we would be prepared for the inevitable shock
6. Jeannette ordered all of our office supplies
7. Today we went to the baseball game
8. Don't turn off the lights
9. Where the wild things are
10. You should read this book